Wide interest in music, jazz books sparked by record boom

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

The explosion of interest in music, caused by the recording boom of the 1960s and 1970s, has resulted in an unprecedented variety of music literature.

There are literally hundreds of titles on popular music and jazz available at many large bookstores, ranging from minutely detailed examinations of the Kansas City jazz style to quickie epistles to Alice Cooper et al.

The demand for music books is so great that they are often of erratic quality. Thus, if you intend to buy a book for a music fan, be advised to take the time out not to judge a book by its cover.

However, in the plethora of verbiage and visuals, there are books of quality and practically that make ideal gifts.

ELLINGTON

Perhaps the classiest music book of all is the collection of reminiscences by Duke Ellington, entitled **Music Is My Mistress.** The volume, beautifully printed on strong velour paper, is loaded with a garland of Ellingtonia, conveyed with the inimitable style and savvy that made Duke the greatest jazzman of all. Anyone interested in the development of American music of this century will treasure this volume. At about fifteen dollars, it is a bargain.

One of the most valuable photo-and-prose books on jazz is **The Jazz Scene,** by Charles Fox with special photography by Valerie Wilmer. Both are wellknown commentators in Europe, and they've come up with a remarkably clear and up-to-date view of leading jazz musicians, young and old.

Jazz biographies are often enjoyable to the confirmed addict, what with the anecdotes and tall tales, but few are able to portray lives entwined with music with such sensitivity as **Bessie,** Chris Albertson's work on blues great bessie Smith, and Bird Lives, Ross Russell's controversial ode to saxophonist Charlie Parker. A sense of tragedy comes through the numerous colorful adventures, with the action coming so thick and fast making these books ideal for the jazz fan and novice alike.

ANALYTICAL

Of the more analytical works, recommended for students of music, are **The Jazz Tradition** by Martin Williams, and **Urban Blues** by Charles Keil. Both are well-documented, not nearly as ponderous as so much jazz analysis is, and offer fine perspectives.

Moving into the rock field, the prospective gift-buyer is confronted with a goodly number of fly-by-night shallow items, yet there still exists enough good rock history books.

The brightest new addition to the rock paperback library is **The New Musical Express Book of Rock,** which is, quite simply, the most complete and up-to-date (to early 1975) encyclopedia of rock music. Full group line-ups and changes and complete discographies are included, and the 429-page book is held together by a dry critical prose style. Guaranteed enjoyment for any rock fan.

Rolling Stone, the counter-culture generation's version of Life magazine, has put out many books on rock that have historical as well as fan interest. There are two volumes of **The Rolling Stone Interviews,** featuring the inner thoughts of such idols as John Lennon, Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, Grace Slick, Phil Spector, David Crosby, B. B. King, Van Morrison, Rod Stewart, Keith Richard, Paul Simon and many more. Their opinions are rarely as expert as their music, yet these volumes are bound to attract the interest of even the most casual fan.

Rolling Stone has also published probably the definitive collection of rock photos, entitled **Shooting Stars.**

DEVELOPMENT

There are many books that attempt to chart the development of rock 'n' roll, but the out-and-out classic is **The Sound of The City,** by British student of rock Charlie Gillett. His crisply written, detailed work traces the roots of rhythm 'n' blues and R 'n'R from its post-war beginnings. He stops just short of the late 1960s, his dividing line denoting the new age of rock. The book critically and lovingly focuses upon the process of making urban music on a roots level.

Numerous volumes by the so-called "rock critics" exist, but few offer historical perspective beyond their own opinions. Consequently, the most entertaining "critique" on rock is the one furthest out in left-field, **The Aesthetics of Rock,** by R. Meltzer. It started out as a college thesis and winds up an exhaustively copious put-on of academia as well as an absurdly informative view of rock.

BIOGRAPHIES

Rock biographies tend to be idolatry and filled with gossip, but **Bob Dylan,** by Anthony Scadito, is probably the best-researched portrayal of a man living with his legend. **Jimi Hendrix,** by veteran British rock chronicler Chris Welch, also offers a fascinating, if more tragic, rock life. For the recording industry executive side of things, Clive, by former Columbia Records president Clive Davis, is the nonpareil viewpoint.

Several rock picturebooks have been published, including a recent **Elvis Presley Scrapbook,** a giant softcovered collection of photos from the Elvis' early career, all of his movies, and his return to the stage in the late 1960s. It makes for fine nostalgia for the first generation of rock 'n' rollers.

Finally, if your child or friend is playing guitar, bass or piano, there's a slew of sumptuous music sheet folios of hits by the rock generation's favorite stars.

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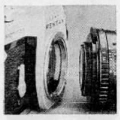

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